Openness, Access, and Governance in Asian "Network Societies": Developing an Open Governance Index

Final Technical Report

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Project Abstract

Despite the proliferation of different ICT indices in the world, the unique features of this index are: a) it measures the extent of the civil society groups in utilizing ICTs to ensure their participation in society; b) it integrates into the measure the extent of the 'openness' of the social and political environment to ensure that the utilization of ICTs in government and business are maximized.

The Pan EGov: Understanding Democratic eGovernance in Asia Project undertook the Open E-Governance Index project that aims to develop a quantitative tool to gauge the state of e-governance around the world. It piloted the framework and the methodology in four countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

The objectives of the Open e-Governance Index project are to: a) to further understand democratic e-governance, particularly through developing the discourse of "Open E-Governance"; b) to help develop policy on ICT and governance; and engage policy stakeholders directly, around the notions of "Open Governance"; and c) to develop a concrete resource for citizens/individuals, groups/non-government organizations to engage the policymakers on "Open E-Governance".

In each country, a small team of researchers undertook activities related to the mapping of national level indicators using secondary research. A perception survey on Open E-Governance and review of secondary data was conducted.

The pilot program enabled the measurement, not only the extent of the efficiency of the delivery of e-government services, but also ability of governments to improve access to ICTs by different sectors of society, especially civil society organizations, and the emphasize communication rights and rights to open data and knowledge. Due to the emphasis on a more comprehensive definition of e-government, there has been a widespread interest in undertaking the measurement in other countries.

***Keywords**: Index, e-Governance, Openness, Access, Information and Communication Technologies

1 Basic Project Information

Project Title	Openness, Access, and Governance in Asian "Network Societies": Developing an Open Governance Index
Countries in which research took place	Asian regional scope, with pilot assessments in four (4) countries: Thailand, India, Pakistan and Philippines.
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IDRC Program Area	Information and Communications Technologies for Development

2 The Research Problem

Politics, Governance, and Development. It cannot be denied that a country's system of politics and governance is a key driver of development. The quality of a nation's political and governance mechanisms is often a powerful indicator of its potential for continuing progress in a complex global environment. On one hand, it is the realm of politics and governance that seeks to address the needs and aspirations of its citizens; on the other, it allows a nation to integrate itself in a relevant way within the global community. The domain of politics and governance often drives reform and innovation in all other spheres of society—the economic, social and cultural realms. Hence the expression, "everything is political", applies, particularly in nation-states aspiring to achieve higher levels of development in a complex global environment.

Information, Communications and Democracy. In a globalizing world enabled by advances in information and communications systems and technologies, various shifts in the objective and subjective conditions that underpin societies have served to challenge traditional notions of politics and governance in ever-increasing ways. Concepts of sovereignty, representation, participation and even the nature of government and citizenship itself are evolving rapidly as technology enables new arenas of public administration and political mobilization.

The capacities of national communities and nation-states to adjust to these shifting realities now play a large part in how governments become more relevant to its various constituencies. In so-called "network societies" that are emerging from such shifts, nation-states have been forced to rethink and even reinvent traditional governance paradigms. Governments are discovering that there is much value in enabling the environment in which information and

communications—through their infrastructure, systems, applications, content—can best be leveraged to achieve development goals. Parallel to this, states have been similarly challenged by how ICTs have had an impact on the democratic equation.

Openness in Governance. It is in this sphere of politics and governance where a growing discourse on aspects of **"open government"** and the broader **"open governance"** is emerging. The value of "openness", though not a new concept, is now increasingly emerging as a political value by which states —-as well as non-state actors—-seek to extend traditional notions of democracy and visions of development.

In a very real sense within the realm of "realpolitik", such a measure of open governance would be especially useful in the context of policy advocacy. Policy stakeholders may use such measurements to audit their governments according to certain norms and standards that are fast gaining acceptance.

Certain governments' particularly sensitive to international audits could be pressured to adopt policies and programs which would address perceived "deficits". In addition, a comparative approach—i.e., in applying the measure between and among different states—could also be helpful as both a benchmarking exercise, and also as a knowledge-sharing tool between administrations.

But how does one now measure "openness" in governance in emergent and ever evolving "network societies"?

- Traditionally *"open government"* has referred to the discourse on *transparency in government*, where citizens have free and unhampered access to important information; after all, open, transparent and accountable decision-making is considered to be the essence of any democratic system. With the continuing development of enabling technologies (i.e., ICTs and the Internet), the demand for this has only increased, both in domestic and international contexts.
- On another level, *freedom of expression and human rights* advocates have for a long time linked openness with democratic practice by states in relation to their citizens' rights, which often extends to media rights (e.g., press freedom). They have challenged re-emerging "national security" paradigms which have, at times, curtailed basic communication rights, and have resisted various forms of state secrecy or intervention (e.g., content filtering and surveillance) by the state on its citizens.

But concepts of "*openness*" in government/governance are evolving (and not all notions of openness in governance are considered positive[1]). As the ecosystem in which information and knowledge circulates and thrives becomes more apparent, and the enabling systems (technical and political) are more transparent to public scrutiny, public interest concerns now extend to non-traditional areas of governance, which relate directly to how ICTs and the internet are impacting politics and society. States then now enter into the realm of ICT and internet policy and governance (e.g., the annual Internet Governance Forum, as a successor to the World Summit on the Information Society). With paradigms referring to the Internet as a "global public good" for example, new realms of "openness" are now considered public interest concerns.

[1] Many civil society organizations for example would take exception to notions of openness in the economic sphere, where paradigms of 'open' economies (i.e., free trade) associated with neo-liberalism would have a negative connotation.

- The quality of a *government's web presence and web strategy* often determines how ICTs can be leveraged to disseminate government information, as well as enhance public participation. The so called Web 2.0 generation of applications only extends this further. In addition to this, particular implications of strategic ICT use for traditionally disadvantaged sectors are significant in bringing them to more active political participation. (Access by specific segments of the population—e.g., persons with disabilities—has also come to the fore with developments in new technologies.)

- Openness could be taken further here as a natural consequence of the participation dividend referred to above, and this would bring us into the realm of *openness in the area of decision making processes to citizen/civil society input*. Following more progressive notions of eGovernance – it is this openness that could ultimately impact the political process.

- *Open technical and digital standards*, especially in how government collects, stores and shares information, is becoming a growing concern as proprietary systems and technologies are now seen to limit or even compromise development objectives (i.e., government interoperability; universal access).

- Related to the previous point is the phenomenon of *Free/Open Source Software (FOSS)* and its perceived (and real) advantages to governments, as public administrations (local and national) have found public benefit it opting for non-proprietary applications in software choices.

- *"Access to Knowledge"* discourses, mostly referring to flexibilities within and alternatives to existing "intellectual property rights" (IPR) regimes have also pointed out how a vibrant public domain and "global commons" of information and knowledge must be protected and extended, and *"open content"* initiatives are multiplying with increasing encouragement from governments. Types of knowledge and information which are seen to be of great use when publicly accessible and not subject to private enclosures include: publicly-funded research and different levels of academic content; important research in health-related sciences; traditional knowledge, etc.

- *Open access* models have also evolved to in key aspects of the information info- and infra-structure, as public administrations experiment with initiatives based on regarding access to the Internet as a public good necessitating public investment and should be allowed to flourish under less restrictive policy environments.

- The other side of the openness discourse relates to how to use the information/knowledge in a meaningful way. Three factors may affect this: First, the information needs to be of good enough quality, is timely, and with the appropriate contextual information that it can be understood. Second, citizens (or civil society groups/intermediaries) need to have the skills/knowledge to understand it. Third, there need to be mechanisms to act on it – accountability mechanisms need to be associated with the information and knowledge being accessed. The concept-building aspect that the project hopes to achieve may attempt to explore these factors more deeply, and see what must be included in any assessment tool to be developed.

The challenge therefore is to document and seek to codify the traditional and emergent notions of "open government/open governance". It is important to further extend the notion of "openness" within public administrations; in so doing, there is value in documenting and supporting successful initiatives in this area, while providing governments with basic standards in which to base efforts in these emerging spheres.

Information (and knowledge) has indeed been referred to as the currency of democracy. Promoting the open sharing of this information and knowledge has thus been framed as a public good, in a global environment, which has proclaimed ICTs and the internet as positive social forces for democracy and development.

3 Objectives

GENERAL OBJECTIVES
The general aims of this project are aligned to the overall objectives of the overarching Democratic Pan E-Governance initiative, which as adapted include:

1. To further **understand democratic e-governance**, particularly through the lens of the discourse of "Open Government/Governance";
2. To develop a concrete resource for citizens/individuals, groups/non-government organizations to engage the policymakers on "Open Government/Governance".
3. To help engender more appropriate policies on ICT and governance around the notions of "Open Governance";

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
Towards the above, this project will aim**:**

1. To develop a new concept/new notions of "Open Government/Open Governance" towards the advancement of a conceptual framework that builds on previous discourses and integrates new aspects of openness enabled by ICTs and the emergent "network society".
2. To develop measurable indicators/metrics for the various domains of "Open Government/Open Governance", as practical application of the conceptual framework above, and to compile these into an assessment tool (i.e., an "Open Governance Index") to assess public administrations and their policy/regulatory environments, and relevant non-State actors.
3. To conduct an assessment of four pilot countries in Asia using the abovementioned Index, to pilot test its use and validate its utility.

4 Methodology

There were several phases in undertaking the project, from conceptualizing the concept of 'Open Governance' and developing the dimensions of measurements, to piloting the proposed methodology and finalizing the computational scores for the index in different Asian countries.

<u>Conceptualizing the Concept of "Open eGovernance"</u>

A significant amount of time during the project period was focused on developing the concept of "Open Government/ Open Governance." Online discussions were undertaken with several experts on internet governance, community informatics, privacy rights, on developing and

distilling the concept. Meetings were also undertaken with social indicators experts in ensuring that the concept would be translated into concrete and measurable indicators.

Because an Asian regional workshop with resource persons (originally conceptualized in the project proposal) did not push through due to unavoidable circumstances (i.e., difficulties in assembling a high-level team, political problems in the country where the workshop was to take place), a Philippine based multi-disciplinary team, composed of experts in governance, information and communication technology, gender and quantitative data methods, was assembled. During meetings with the team, it was deemed that to provide more focus and value-added to previous measures of governance, the envisioned Index should concentrate on ***"Open E-Governance".***

Open E-Governance was defined in the project as a series of activities composed of coordinating, arbitrating, networking and regulating with and of information and communication technologies, not only the state, but also non-state actors, including business, civil society and communities. It is critically linked with the essential 'steering' functions of the state, but also with the normal functions that other political actors and institutions in ensuring that people are able to participate in decision-making. It is also a process of connecting within and among state and non-state actors. In its present incarnation, it also is defined as an approach in which "government and the public interact and collaborate in order to make the best use of information and services, sometimes coming up with new products and services" not deemed possible when not using this approach.

Finalizing the Areas for Assessment

After this conceptual shift was established, six areas/ dimensions of Open E-Governance were pinpointed. These dimensions were identified from the different functions that different state and non-state actors should undertake in terms of their 'steering' functions of and with information and communications technologies. These dimensions include the following:

Area 1: Open Government Online: State and Quality of E-Government (Government web presence). This dimension intends to capture citizen-facing applications or front-office E-governance mechanisms. In general it examines the new (ICT) channels available to citizens to obtain information from and about government, share/express their views with decision-makers or policymakers, and collaborate in governance. It includes dimensions that are related to interfacing with citizens, providing services, asking for feedback, and listening to feedback. It does not include use of ICTs for internal efficiencies.

This component examines *how well* and *how much* a government utilizes ICTs. This seeks to reflect the simple presence of citizen-facing applications, the quality of its content, as well as the extent to which its products are utilized in the daily practice of governance. Applications include, broadly, websites, SMS, social networking sites, and blogs. Some indicators of quality of each application are captured by the measure.

Area 2: Interconnected EGovernment/Digital Government. This dimension seeks to reflect a government's ability to place its public functions online, which in itself comprises many aspects of ICT enablement. Its inclusions are ICT-based mechanisms to enhance efficiencies and effectiveness of back-office operations within government. These include the ability of different government agencies to share data and communicate with one another, how data storage is undertaken, the level of automation of government and the ability of

government to develop and implement a unified data for using ICTs with the government bureaucracy.

The dimension aims to capture the presence of open digital and technological standards as well as government interoperability frameworks. This area also reflects the extent to which the government uses ICT tools to enhance in-house operations and its ability to pull together all its agencies under an interoperable framework within which entities can share data in the most efficient manner.

Area 3: Universal Access/Digital Inclusion. This dimension measures the extent to which government ensures that all citizens benefit from the different information and communication technologies that are available. These include the presence of universal access and universal literacy policies, competition policy and the concentration of media ownership, affordability and access of ICTs to the general population, and the multiplicity of information sources.

Area 4: Civil society use of ICTs. Since Open E-Governance seeks to assess not just e-government but rather e-governance, the index also includes the ICT readiness and utilization by civil society organizations and other non-State organizations such as political parties and people's organizations. While openness in information gathered and shared by government is imperative for Open E-Governance, the citizenry must have alternative sources of knowledge and opinion and this is a critical part of fostering transparency in governance. Independent organizing and independent creation of knowledge is an indicator of decentralized power.

In this dimension, we seek to include independent social and political actors and their attempts to generate and mobilize support for some person, issue, or cause, all essentially to measure the extent are such groups in a country using ICT tools to achieve their objectives.

Area 5: Access to Data, Information and Knowledge. This dimension measures the extent of the access of the general population to information and knowledge. This includes the presence of policies relating to freedom of information, access to publicly funded research (open content), availability of government data in a reusable format (open data) and the ability of citizens to access information relevant to their needs.

Area 6. Fostering an enabling environment for communication rights. This includes the extent that the government recognizes and fosters the right to free expression, right over personal communication, cultural freedom, and the use of local languages. It also measures the extent of government to control or limit the use of information and communication technologies among its citizens.

Developing Indicators for the Revised Areas and Finalizing the Data-Gathering Strategy

The next step was to distil indicators for each area of Open E-Governance and these indicators were developed from long discussions within the core team and some resource persons as to the problem of "how" to gather the needed data to assess each area. Many of these indicators were taken from existing indicator systems, but several were also developed from the experts' existing knowledge on the different ICT governance systems in different countries.

It was decided that there were two data-gathering tools that would be used in measuring the level of E-Governance:

- A contextual desk research, to establish verifiable data in each country as it related to the existence/non-existence of related policies and programs (known also as country background information); and
- A perception survey with a purposive sample of multi-stakeholder key informants.

Each of the data-gathering methodologies would be undertaken at the country level which would be utilized to generate measurable indicators for the calculation of an 'Open E-Governance' Index.

The perception survey strategy was a quick way to distil the most important indicators from a host of possible ones. Particularly for this, the research team had to balance how complex the tool would have to be (both in terms of technical concepts, as well as actual length of the survey) if this was to be administered to different policy and governance stakeholders in ICT. In this case, it was decided that a more generic/layperson-targeted set of questions be administered to the multi-stakeholder sample of respondents projected.
The decision to administer a perception survey to different stakeholders also guided the discussion as to how to develop the "index". i.e., the numerical "grade" that would be assigned eventually to each indicator to come up with a score that would be comparable to different countries. Thus, a needed discussion on the computational methodology was also undertaken, to make basic decisions on how to develop such a numerical "index", learning from similar experiences from other similar projects.

For the perception survey, 80 to 100 informants would be the targeted number of those who should participate in the survey. The informants would be selected on the basis of their extent of knowledge of the major components of the index and on the basis of their diversity, i.e. from government, business/ private sector, civil society organizations/ non-state organizations, academe, media, political parties. The selection of the informants would also consider gender (around 30 percent of respondents should be women) and regional (around 20 percent of respondents should be from outside the capital). The key informant for each sector should ideally have a fairly strong knowledge, awareness and exposure to various ICT for development projects, initiatives, and advocacies.

Secondary data research would be utilized for the country background information. A list of indicators and possible sources of data were provided to country partners; the final list of indicators obtained for the country research depended on the availability of data. The secondary data research consisted of reviewing the documents that are available and provided some specific quantitative and qualitative measures for indicators, which can be obtained from the following sources:

1. Official government reports, especially from the government's central information and communication technology policy ministry/ unit and development planning ministry/ unit;
2. Reports of statistical surveys and administrative data, especially from the national statistics offices;
3. Academic studies and papers;
4. Non-government organization and private sector documents;
5. Others, including newspaper reports.

The survey form and the country-background data can be found in the Annexes A and B.

Implementing the Data-Gathering Methodologies in Four Pilot Countries

Country partners were selected in gathering the data for the methodologies. For this project, these included the University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong), Bytes for All (Pakistan), Ateneo de Manila University (Philippines) and the Chulalongkorn University (Thailand). There were asked to hire coordinators/ managers for the research project and other additional staff to implement the methodologies listed. The country teams were given a period of around three months to finalize the data-gathering activities.

Calculating the Open E-Governance Index and Disseminating the Results

Once the data was encoded into a statistical software, the country and dimensional index scores were computed and analysed. In calculating the **Open E-Governance Index** (OeGI), responses to the perception survey and secondary data research were translated into numerical scores to facilitate calculation of the area/ dimensional scores; for the country score, each of the dimensions were weighted and the scores were summed up. The index weights are as follows:

Area 1: Meshed eGovernment	- 20%
Area 2: eParticipation Channels	- 10%
Area 3: Digital Inclusion	- 20%
Area 4: ICT empowered Civil Society	- 20%
Area 5: Open Access	- 15%
Area 6: Communication Rights	- 15%

National reports were written scrutinizing and summarizing the results at the national level; the reports also included a review of the related indicators in the contextual data research. These were then submitted and consolidated at the regional level. A summary of the reports would be published so that the results of the project can reach a broad audience and disseminated to relevant stakeholders including participants in the implementation process, i.e., survey key informants, participants of validation workshop

The results in each country were discussed in a dissemination workshop that included important key informants of the perception survey and other experts consulted in drafting of the report; major policymakers from government, business and civil society were also invited to the workshop. The final country report should be produced after comments of the country workshop have been integrated.

5 Project Activities

Originally, the first phase of the project aimed to engage Asian region-wide experts in the field of open government and in conducting social audits of public institutions to review the current literature and on-going discourse on concept on the subject, and also on experts on the six dimensions listed above. Then a multi-stakeholder regional workshop would be convened to interrogate the theoretical assumptions of 'openness' in governance and problematize the question of assessment frameworks and appropriate metrics.

Due to unforeseen delays in undertaking the project which delayed the first phase of the project by a year (from early 2010 to early 2011), the proponent worked closely with the project holder ideacorp, through the Pan EGov project manager himself (Dr. Emmanuel

Lallana) and to strategize the best way to fast-track the project in the midst of the relative failure of previous efforts. The fact that Dr. Lallana is also one of the most prominent area experts in governance and e-governance was also a positive factor in directly involving him, as he could also weigh in on the concept development and research strategy.

Upon his suggestion and consultations with others, the most cost- and time-efficient way to accelerate the project's implementation was to convene a Philippine-based core group to assess previous work done and come up with recommendations as to the final conceptual framework and methodological considerations. The decisions outlined in the previous section were a result of this.

The Research Team, individuals from the Foundation for Media Alternatives who were primarily responsible for the implementation of this project (and the authors of this report), therefore assembled a multi-disciplinary group of senior researchers, academicians, and governance advocates sensitive to ICT. A formal preliminary roundtable discussion was convened in February 2011 to precisely discuss pending issues, seeking to fast-track the process of coming up with the revised areas of assessment, which could then be consulted with other international consultants and researchers. A series of meetings commenced from February to May, essentially shepherding the finalization of a revised conceptual framework and suggesting the appropriate data-gathering methodology. Aside from Dr. Lallana, the following experts were engaged in the project:

- Dr. Antonio Lavina, Dean, School of Government, Ateneo de Manila University;
- Dr. Amado Mendoza, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines;
- Dr. Clarissa David, Director, Assistant Professor and Director of Research and Publications, College of Mass Communications, University of the Philippines;
- Ms. Chat Garcia- Ramilo, Women Support Program Networking Coordinator, Association for Progressive Communications;
- Mr. Horacio Cadiz, President and Chief Technology Officer, Philippine Network Foundation;
- Mr. Leland de la Cruz, Director, Development Studies Program, Ateneo de Manila University;
- Dr. Violeda Umali, Associate Professor, College of Mass Communications, University of the Philippines
- Ms. Maria Teresa Garcia, former head executive assistant to the chair, Commission on Information and Communication Technology and public sector specialist of various donor programs in the ICT sector;
- Ms. Cherry Pie Maraya, former Commission on Information and Communication Technology official.

The above individuals comprised the Project Advisory Team. Ms. Garcia also helped developed a review of literature on e-governance indicator systems, as part of the work in the engagement of consultants.

When the decision to administer a perception survey was finalized, the team brought in a couple of experts in this area as well as for quantitative methodologies, and at least one of them will be retained as a formal consultant (Dr. Umali). Many of the attendees of these meetings acted as resource persons and discussants to specific areas of the tool, and also were allotted modest honoraria and per diems for their contributions. Staff functions in organizing and documenting the meetings were also compensated.

These series of Core Research Group meetings were held on the following dates: February 16, March 3, April 19, May 2, May 9, May 13, May 24, and May 30. The discussions were also undertaken through many email exchanges and online discussions of draft documents.

In the middle of all these meetings, a unique opportunity presented itself to consult the evolving frameworks and solicit comments and suggestions on conceptual and methodological issues. This was the Networking and Learning Forum for ICT Researchers & Practitioners that was held in Bohol, Philippines on March 17-19, 2011. Convened by the Association of Progressive Communications (APC), this global event brought together about 100 researchers from all over the world. As Open Governance was a thematic priority of APC, it allowed this project space and time to present our initial work in at least two areas which were attended by a significant number of stakeholders and interested parties. The presence of the Research Team there together with Dr. Lallana allowed us to solicit feedback which we then brought back to the Project Advisory Team.

The instruments utilized to undertake the research methodologies (perception survey and the contextual desk review), together with the protocols necessary to implement these, were then finalized in June, 2011. During the same month, meetings were undertaken with the country partners in Pakistan, Thailand, Hong Kong and the Philippines, and the contact persons were provided with initial information on the methodologies and the implementation of the tools. And lastly, a pre-test with informants belonging to the academe, government, civil society and the media was undertaken to improve the design of the perception survey. An expert in governance and survey methodologies, Prof. Ronald Holmes, president of the Pulse Asia, was consulted in refining the survey tool.

By July 2011, the engagement of all country teams was finalized and specific instructions were given in the implementation of the research. The country teams undertook their field research from August to mid-October. Continuous contact between the country teams and the research team was undertaken during this period in order to fine-tune the administration of the process. By end of October, the country teams submitted an interim report of the results of their studies.

A regional synthesis workshop was undertaken in November 5- 6 to discuss the country results and to identify issues in the implementation of the project. This was also an opportunity to exchange information and views on the project framework and dimensions, and also to map further plans to strengthen the analysis and conclusions of the different country papers.

After the workshop, the computational methodology was further reviewed to ensure comparability of results across countries and to ensure simplicity in calculation of the OeGI. Coordination meetings and regular communications was made by the research team with the different country teams to ensure completeness of the country reports. The publication of the project report and the different country reports were also being prepared by the end of November.

6 Project Outputs

The outputs of the project include the following:

- Development of a **publication on the conceptual framework and measurement methodology of Open E-Governance Index**; this is currently being finalized as of this writing. This will include the framework for assessing 'Open E-Governance' and an in-depth discussion on the different dimensions of this concept. The methodologies and protocols in implementing the methodologies will be discussed in detail, and the country and dimensional scores will be provided. The analysis of results and the implications of the project in terms of strengthening Open E-Governance in Asia will be discussed.

- **Country reports on Open E-Governance**; this will include reports on Hong Kong, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand, where the implementation of the project was piloted. The reports will include an overview of e-governance in these countries, the analysis of the dimensional scores on OeGI and the implications for the different country concerned.

- The **review of literature on Open E-Governance** will also be published. This will provide an overview of the concept, a discussion of the research gaps in this area and how the project responds to the issues listed.

7 Project Outcomes

The main project outcome is the reconfiguration of the concept of 'Open E-Governance' which would not only include the concept of the state and quality of government presence in the web but also include indicators of civil society use of ICTs, access to open data and knowledge, and communication rights, which are not usually found in other e-government indicators.

This broader configuration of the 'Open E-Governance' concept has in fact attracted a wide number of civil society organizations and international development groups that there is some indication that the research methodology would be adapted in other countries. Some of the interested in undertaking the project are civil society organizations in Latin America and Africa; there is also some interest in implementing the project methodology in Kazakhstan and Bangladesh.

8 Overall Assessment and Recommendations

Even the project is still being undertaken in its pilot phase, there has been a lot of interest among civil society organizations and international development organizations, mainly because of the inclusion of specific dimensions not found in other e-governance indices. This is due to the reaction that the other indices put a premium on the efficiency of the delivery of e-government services (and thus more economically advanced countries would have higher scores), and less on the ability of these nations to improve access to ICTs by different sectors of society, especially non-government organizations and peoples' organizations, and the emphasize rights to communicate.

However, there are still refinements that need to be made if the project would be implemented in the future.

First, the original intention of widening the scope of experts (especially those non-Philippine based) that would define the framework was not achieved. On one hand, reducing the number of experts involved enhanced achievement of the project objectives; a framework thought to be comprehensive to accommodate the different aspects of Open E-Governance was readily achieved. However, despite the presence of this framework, it has been felt by the research team that the framework could be better distilled and more nuanced, given the different ICT environments in other regions, such as Latin America and Africa, which the project advisory team may only have passing knowledge.

Second, there may need to review the use of the perception survey as the main source of calculating the OeGI in different countries as there may be other indices that would efficiently measure the scores for some of its indicators. The review of the other existing indices is being undertaken by the project research team given that it may be possibly replicated in other countries. At the same time, this study showed the importance of cross-checking the perception scores with data coming from the secondary literature.

Third, even if the OeGI aims to undertake a cross comparison of the state of Open E-Governance in different countries, it is also important to consider the country specificities in terms of finalizing the measurement tools (such as the survey and the secondary literature) and the implementation protocols. One of the major lessons learned by the project is that there should have been a more comprehensive orientation of the tool among the different country teams to anticipate problems in implementation in different environments.

However, in the end, as the OeGI is carried out in more countries, we could expect its establishment as an accepted measure in the international community as a more comprehensive measure of 'openness' in the use of and with ICTs by various states. More periodic conduct of this evaluation should also provide as a picture of how governments progresses in each area starting from the baseline established during the initial conduct of the study in each country.